DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 230 470 SO 014 718

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TITLE Overview of the American Indian Archeology in the Middle School Project.
INSTITUTION American Univ., Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Dec 82
GRANT ES-20020-80-1681
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (Washington, DC, December, 1982). Print marginally legible.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American Indian Culture; *American Indian Languages; *American Indian Studies; *Archaeology; Art Education; Colonial History (United States); *Curriculum Enrichment; Educational Objectives; Junior High Schools; Latin American History; North American History; Program Descriptions; Science Education; Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS American Indian Archeology Program

ABSTRACT

A project to create a series of archaeology teaching modules and resource guides on American Indians for junior high school social studies is described. University personnel in charge of the project participated with junior high school teachers in the planning and development of the modules and guides. The unifying theme is the diversity of American Indian groups. The groups are explored from the perspective of archaeological inquiry using information from prehistory, linguistics, tribal traditions, and other sources. Activities include data gathering, hypothesis testing, analysis, and drawing conclusions from evidence. The 10 modules currently being developed focus on methods of the archaeological study of the past, culture areas in North America, the use of computers in archaeology, American Indian language families, the origins of corn, the techniques of pottery making, religious practices, pueblos, the cultural sequence of North America, and the archaeology of the Colonial Period. Teaching guides provide background on the relationship of prehistory, ethnology, linguistics, and physical anthropology to archaeology; basic techniques of building a sandbox site; directions for making representative pottery; introductory lessons in American Indian linguistics; and recipes for a typical meal. Some units are suitable for art and science education. (KC)

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OVERVIEW OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN ARCHEOLOGY IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT

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The American University

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (Washington, DC, December, 1982).

INTRODUCTION

The romance of archeology has always been attractive to the general public, although some often exhibit a certain amount of confusion about the limits of the discipline. There is undoubtedly not an archeologist alive who has not been told, upon announcing his profession, "I have some lovely rocks that I collected last summer, would you like to look at them," or "I've always been interested in fossils." Indeed, after an article appeared in U.S. News and World Report about an excavation conducted by the principal investigator in Pennsylvania, a school child wrote me to ask how many dinosaurs had been found on the excavation!

The media often confuse the issue further by portraying archeologists as victims of the curse of some mummy's tomb or as money-hungry collectors of golden relics. "Raiders of the Lost Ark" is a recent and well-known example. Moreover, even if people have a fairly clear idea of what an archeologist does, they often are not aware of recent discoveries or of their historical significance. For instance, in the excavation mentioned above, artifacts were recovered that were nearly 11,000 years old. Many people

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still express a great deal of surprise that humans have been living in the New World for so long a period of time.

THE PROBLEM

Our premise was that the problem, in the main, lies with the profession. Archeologists, we felt, have not communicated to the public either the nature of their discipline or the contributions it can make to the body of modern knowledge.

Recent passage of federal legislation such as the Moss-Bennett bill authorize the expenditure of federal funds for archeological work prior to construction projects. This indicates a public awareness of the importance of archeological data, but these new responsiblities have also placed heavy demands on archeologists' already limited research time and reduced the amount of effort which can be spent on better educating the public.

Consequently, although most archeologists will admit to the importance of communicating their findings to the general public, they are not likely to actually have done so and are even less likely to do so now than in the past. Popular writing of recent years has come from the work of avocational archeologists who, while they may be entirely competent at field work, are often unable to place the results of modern archeological excavation into the context

of the broader field of anthropology or the broader realm of public interest. Instead, archeology remains an exotic romance, a "popular field", something apparently divorced from any practical application to the affairs of public life.

Yet the professional archeologist has much to contribute to knowledge in contemporary society. In the first place, as an anthropologist, the primary focus is to communicate the "cross-cultural perspective" -- to help people stand back and take an objective look at our own culture. As a specialist in recovering the past, the archeologist has much to say about the mistakes and successes of other cultures gone before us.

Finally, as a culture resource manager, the modern archeologist must communicate the rapid rate at which modern society is destroying the cultural heritage of all Americans. It is critical that the understanding of this point reach all levels of the public -- especially its youngest members. We felt that now is the time to begin this important task before the remains of our cultural heritage vanish almost entirely.

A SOLUTION

This project seeks to take a significant step toward rectifying the situation outlined above by gathering

together a group of scholars at the American University, all with complementary interests in archeological issues, who can work together with teachers on the problem of making known to the public just what archeology is, how archeological inquiry works, and what the archeological perspective has to contribute to public understanding of our national heritage.

Since most elementary schools study the American Indian in fifth and eighth grades (the middle school level), this appears to be an ideal place to start in educating both teachers and students in the knowledge that can be contributed by modern professional archeology. There is a clear need for such information to be made available to the middle school, especially if American Indian related topics are the focus of the materials. For instance, Social Studies School Service 1979 Catalog for grades 4 to 8 reveals two pages of items devoted to the American Indian, but nothing specifically referring to archeology. Some archeology items are listed in the main catalog of the same firm but all appear to be directed at older audiences.

In spite of the lack of available materials to supplement textbooks at this level, virtually all American history books used in the middle school discuss the settlement of the New World by American Indian tribes and provide detailed information on the civilizations of Mexico

and Central America--both of these are essentially archeological issues.

Both principal investigators have observed, when addressing school classes at this level, that students are not only extremely enthusiastic about archeology but also have little difficulty in grasping complex methodological concepts such as the principle of superposition which underlies all modern stratigraphic excavation and interpretation. There thus appears to be a definite, although unmet, need for supplemental materials for the middle school that have been prepared by knowledgeable professionals in the disciplines involved.

The project is following a two-pronged approach to respond to this need. The project staff are preparing a series of modules relating to archeological insights into American Indian prehistory along with a teachers' resource guide to assist in the use of the modules in the classroom or to be used separately if the teacher desires. It seemed that given the limited experience with archeology available to classroom teachers and the unsystematic prospect of attacking the problem solely by relying on teacher self-training, it was preferable to prepare materials complete enough for the teachers and students to engage directly with the subject matter through printed materials specifically designed for the middle

school. These could be made available on a national basis for interested teachers.

To assure that this project will be applicable to middle school programs, a small group of middle school teachers from several subject areas are participating in the planning and development of the modules and resource guide. This work together was in the form of a mini-course where the university personnel presented an overview of the content and the teachers contributed ideas about classroom application activities, and preferable teaching strategies. Through this two-way interaction, it was hoped the teachers would receive a grounding in the content, and the university-based staff would sharpen their perceptions about middle school curriculum and instructional needs. This in-service experience provided an unusual opportunity for the university and the local school system to work together to both groups' benefit.

The project is preparing a series of short modules for student use, each of which covers a particular topic appropriate to and of interest at the middle school level. Each is being written by persons with direct knowledge of the subject based upon individual research and teaching experience with the topic to be addressed. The modules are unified by the theme that American Indians lived in many discrete cultural groups. This diversity is explored from

the point of view of archeological inquiry using information from prehistory, linguistics, tribal traditions, and other sources to display these facts. The time periods covered run the gamut from earliest settlement to a variety of modern day concerns and include elements of both ethnohistory and historical (Colonial Period) archeology as well.

The modules are designed for flexible use--a single module to supplement the classroom text, one or several modules to form the basis of a unit on some aspect of American Indian life, or all taken together to be used in lieu of a regular text. Each module will include review questions, exercises, vocabulary, maps, photos, and line drawings as appropriate.

In addition to the explicit information on American Indians, the modules address other middle school educational objectives. First-hand data gathering, hypothesis testing, analysis, and drawing conclusions from evidence, for example, are stressed of each document. While designed specifically for use in social studies classes, some of them would be highly suitable for art and science classes as well. In fact, the modules are designed to assist creative teachers wishing to develop their own unique curriculum. Therefore, the modules are being written to serve as broad a range of purposes as possible.

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I. People Who Study People: Archeologists and American Indian Tribes: This module discusses archeologists -- prehistoric and historic -- and how they go about studying the American Indians' past. Techniques of excavation and interpretation are explained. The reaction of various American Indian tribes to this sometimes unwelcome intrusion are also discussed, and recent efforts to respond to tribal concerns are stressed.

II. Many Different People are Called American Indians: This module reviews the culture areas of North America and the cultural types that inhabited each one. The prehistory, environment, subsistence, material culture, social organization and religion of each area are briefly discussed. Evidence from culture areas found in representative sites are illustrated.

III. Computers in Archeology: This module will discuss and illustrate the number of different ways that computers are used in archeology. It will include a program for plotting the location of artifacts within a site written in straightforward BASIC so that it can be used on as many different kinds of computers as possible. The third module originally was entitled Where Did the Tribes Come From? and was to be about the settlement of the New World. However, in practice, this material was covered in shortened form in two other modules. When the teachers insisted on a module

dealing with computers, since there was such a demand for computer related materials and since most schools now have a microcomputer, it was decided to drop the original module.

IV. They Speak in Many Tongues: American Indian language families are discussed in terms of similarities and differences. What the languages tell the archeologist about prehistoric cultures and social preferences are also illustrated.

V. Corn, an Indian Gift to the World: The origins of corn are discussed, along with the remarkably similar ways in which it was cultivated among most Indian groups who practiced horticulture.

VI. Pottery: What It Can Tell Us about the Past: The techniques of manufacture of pottery and the decorative motifs used in the various culture areas of North America in which pottery was made are described. The module illustrates the kinds of information that the archeologist can gain from a careful study of pottery.

VII. Son of the Sun: Priest-Kings in the Southeastern U.S.: This module offers an ethnohistorical and archeological account of the little-known (to the general public) high cultures of the southeast. It focuses on the Southern Death Cult as a seasonal death-rebirth agricultural cult, and also discusses the effects of diseases introduced by the Spaniards on the social system of these tribes.

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VIII. The First American Apartment Houses: This module focuses on the development of cultural diversity in the American Southwest, including the Pueblos and the large scale irrigation systems they constructed. The difficulties of living in the desert environment are explained.

IX. American Indian Civilizations: This module reviews the cultural sequence in Meso-America and its rise from simple foragers through horticulture to the empires of Teotihuacan, Tula, and Tenochtitlan.

X. Ordinary People in History: the Archeology of the Colonial Period: This module will stress the insights that historic archeology can give us into the life of the ordinary people of colonial times who receive little attention in the written histories of the period.

Although keyed to the modules, the teachers' resource guide is being written so that it can be used as a self-contained unit by teachers in an individualized instruction program to meet their own needs. An extensive listing of suitable reference materials are included at the end of each chapter. The final text will be based on the teachers' actual experience with the modules in their classrooms.

I. Anthropology and Archeology: This chapter provides the basic background material for the teacher to understand the relationship of prehistory, ethnology, linguistics and

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physical anthropology to American Indian archeology.

II. Building a "Sandbox Site": The basic techniques of excavating and recording a site are described and directions given to simulate an archeological site using a small sandbox in the classroom made with materials available at any hardware store. Students will then be able to actually excavate the site in the classroom and write a report about it. Artifacts may be either student made or contemporary materials may be substituted. A complete materials list is provided.

III. Culture Areas of North America: A description of the culture area concept is given along with the diversity of cultural solutions. Data, probably in tabular form, are provided for a variety of traits from each culture area.

The teacher will be able to stress either cultural diversity or to focus in on any one culture area with importance for the unit being taught.

IV. American Indian Pottery: Complete directions fo making representative Woodland, Mississippian, Southwestern and Mesoamerican pottery, including a complete materials list are provided, along with methods of simulating paste, temper, means of manufacture and firing temperatures. Wasters (pots broken in firing) may be used for artifacts in the sandbox site described above. suitable safety equipment at a much later age).

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V. American Indian Languages: This chapter will introduce the teacher to American Indian linguistics and provide introductory lessons in American Indian languages.

This chapter will provide training in language skills to the teacher which will allow the students to actually speak a few sentences and functional phrases in the languages. These skills can be used in conjunction with other Indian data to provide a complete picture of Indian life.

VI. Colonial Diet: This chapter will provide recipes for a typical meal (greens and corn dodgers) of the ordinary people, indentured servants and slaves in the colonies capable of being cooked cheaply and simply with such implements as an electric skillet in the classroom. Nutritional information on the meal will be provided, along with menus from rich colonists as well as Eastern Indian menus from ethnohistoric documents.

Comparison of the menus will provide valuable information on good modern nutrition as well as an appreciation of the skill and successful adaptation of the American Indian--whose diet was better nutritionally that that of the poor colonist. The menu of the poor colonist will also epitomize the amalgam of the American colonies--the greens are Scots-Irish cooked in an African way while the corn is Indian.

Appendix: This will contain a list by state of archeologists, tribal councils, and tribal publications, as well as a bibliography of sources on Indian prehistory and ethnology suitable for use by the classroom teacher.

This appendix will provide the background material for the teacher to adapt the modules and resource guide for local needs. While most of this information is available elswhere, these listings will provide the convenience likely to lead to full utilization of available resources, given the great demands on teachers' time.

Both the modules and the teachers' resource guide are designed to be used by the classroom teacher to design special units to meet local needs. For instance, the teacher might want to combine the modules on historic archeology and the origins of corn with the colonial diet chapter of the resource guide into a unit on colonial life. The project's aim in preparing these materials is to allow the teacher in the classroom to take a creative role in using them.

STATUS

Three of the modules are currently being field tested, with a fourth nearly ready for the printer. The remainder of the modules, all of which have been written except for the one on computers, will be tested in the spring. At that

time, after teachers have had a chance to use all of the modules we will have a meeting to decide on the exact materials needed in the teachers' resource guide, and it will be prepared and tested. The project will terminate in May of 1983. We are grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for their financial support (Grant #ES-20020-80-1681).

*END